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THE MILITARY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST (MEMS) QUALIFICATION AND THE MEDICAL UNITS OF THE STATE DEFENSE FORCE: IT JUST MAKES SENSE

Colonel James L. Greenstone, EdD, MSC, TXSG

It makes a lot of sense when you think about it. Sponsored by the State Guard Association of the United States and the Military Emergency Management Specialist (MEMS) Academy, the Military Emergency Management Specialist is a qualification that is individually earned, and that recognizes personal effort and skills development. As with many who are reading this, this author has the privilege of wearing the military's Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB) as well as the Military Emergency Management Specialist Badge (MEMS). Both represent some of the same things, and each represents important distinctions.

During the early and formative days of the Texas Medical Rangers of the Texas State Guard, it seemed a logical step to encourage relevant and ongoing training. Additionally, this training should be both medically-related and also provide the military bases necessary for a Uniformed Medical Reserve Corps. At first look, the Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB) qualification requirements seemed to fit the bill. While this author has had experience staging an EFMB qualification course, there were some problems that had to be considered. The EFMB skills could be developed into a training schedule that, upon completion, would result in soldiers being prepared to undergo the qualification course. While many of the EFMB skills are useful for field medical units, many of the military requirements go beyond what is needed or even expected in the Texas Medical Rangers, Texas State Guard, and probably most other SDF Brigades.

Finally, the authority to award the badge to those who might complete the qualification course successfully was in some doubt. What would have to be done to get this approved? As good as the course of study would be, the likelihood of having it all come together in a timely and meaningful way seemed doubtful. In addition, was all of this really necessary for a State Defense Force as currently organized?

Enter the Military Emergency Management Specialist Qualification Badge. The skills required, along with the individual nature of the qualification process, makes this the badge of choice for the SDF. Suited for medical and non-medical line units, the Texas Medical Rangers strongly encourages all of its soldiers to earn at least the Basic Badge.¹ Because this qualification is based on individual achievement, regular unit training schedules can remain intact. Coaching and assistance can be offered to MEMS candidates through the current MEMS Academy organization, but most of the work is left to the individual.

Not only is this qualification exactly "what the doctor ordered," so to speak, for the Texas Medical Rangers and for all SDF Brigades and Units, but its very nature makes it well suited for all military and military-related units throughout the United States. There is nothing else like it out there anywhere. To this writer's knowledge, it is a one-of-a-kind qualification that is relevant to the world

¹For detailed information about the three levels of the MEMS Qualification Badge see the MEMS Academy Handbook at <http://www.sgaus.org/MEMShandbook.htm> .

in which we live today, and to the actual circumstances under which State Defense Forces will most likely find themselves.

For the medical side of the house, MEMS is the “EFMB” of the Uniformed Medical Reserve Corps. Those earning it demonstrate a willingness and an ability to respond to the disasters, both man-made and natural, that will certainly demand their attention and expertise. It should be embraced by all SDF Brigades or Units, medical, and non-medical as a way of demonstrating the strong commitment to readiness, preparedness and response. The United States military, both active duty and reserve, will find much to be gained by the time spent in preparing and qualifying. Those in the Civil Air Patrol, especially health service personnel, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the other related groups at all levels will find an invaluable addition to their current training and preparation.

In the final analysis, the MEMS Badge may be a unifying force for all of us who are ready to go where we are needed, when we are needed; in essence, a Badge of Brotherhood. The uniforms may be somewhat different, but the missions are often essentially the same. The inclusiveness of the MEMS Academy and of the MEMS qualification courses may well set the standard in our country for ongoing cooperation in the face of disaster and terrorism.

It is this author’s experience that one of the chief problems between separate groups working in disaster response situations is the unwillingness of each group to share information with other responders, and the lack of acceptance of another group’s training and credentials as equal to their own. The MEMS Qualification may help to correct or to avert these issues in the field.²

² The author invites discussion on the topics of the Military Emergency Management Specialist program and the Texas Medical Rangers, and may be contacted for additional information through drlg1@charter.net or by telephone at 817-882-9415.